

Department Use of Social Media

342.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines to ensure that any use of social media on behalf of the department is consistent with the department mission. The Department endorses the secure use of social media to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange, streamline processes, and foster productivity. This policy establishes the Department's position on the use and management of social media and provides guidance on its management, administration, and oversight. This policy is not intended to address one particular form of social media; rather social media in general, as advances in technology will occur and new tools will emerge.

This policy does not address all aspects of social media use. Specifically, it does not address:

- Personal use of social media by department members (see the Employee Speech, Expression and Social Networking Policy).
- Use of social media in personnel processes (see the Recruitment and Selection Policy).
- Use of social media as part of a criminal investigation, other than disseminating information to the public on behalf of this department (see the Investigation and Prosecution Policy).

342.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Page - The specific portion of a social media website where content is displayed and managed by an individual or individuals with administrator rights.

Post - Content an individual shares on a social media site or the act of publishing content on a site.

Social media - Any of a wide array of Internet-based tools and platforms that allow for the sharing of information, such as the department website or social networking services.

Speech - Expression or communication of thoughts or opinions in spoken words, in writing, by expressive conduct, symbolism, photographs, videotape, or related forms of communication.

342.2 POLICY

The Fargo Police Department recognizes that social media provides a valuable means of assisting the department and its personnel in meeting community outreach, problem-solving, investigative, crime prevention, and related objectives. This policy identifies potential uses, which may be explored or expanded upon as deemed reasonable by administrative and supervisory personnel. The department also recognizes the role that these tools play in the personal lives of some departmental personnel. The personnel use of social media can have bearing on the department personnel in their official capacity. As such, this policy provides

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information of precautionary nature as well as prohibitions on the use of social media by department personnel.

Department members shall ensure that the use or access of social media is done in a manner that protects the constitutional rights of all.

342.3 DEPARTMENT SITES

The use or creation of all department social media sites or pages shall be approved by the Chief of Police or his designee, and shall comply with the City of Fargo Social Media policy. All social media sites or pages shall be administered by the Administrative Services Division commander or his/her designee. All social media sites or pages shall indicate that they are maintained by the department and shall have contact information for the department prominently displayed, if possible. All official social media sites shall be branded with a City of Fargo logo and/or department logo.

Each social media page or site should include an introductory statement, which clearly states the purpose and scope of the agency's presence on the website, if possible. The page should also link to the department's official website, if possible, and should be designed with the target audience in mind (i.e. youth, potential police recruits).

Social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including all information technology and records management policies. Information contained on these sites is subject to open records law, and relevant records retention schedules apply to their content.

All content must be managed, stored, and retrieved to comply with open records laws and e-discovery laws and policies.

Social media sites should state that the opinions expressed by visitors to the pages do not reflect the views or opinions of the department. Pages should clearly indicate that posted comments will be monitored and that the department reserves the right to remove obscenities, off-topic comments, and personal attacks. Pages shall also indicate that any content posted or submitted for posting is subject to public disclosure.

342.4 AUTHORIZED USERS

All social media accounts shall be created as a company or independent account. Accounts shall not be created within or in relation to an employee's personal account or information. Only members authorized by the Chief of Police or the authorized designee may utilize social media on behalf of the Department. Authorized members shall use only department-approved equipment during the normal course of duties to post and monitor department-related social media, unless they are specifically authorized to do otherwise by their supervisors.

The Chief of Police or his/her designee may develop specific guidelines identifying the type of content that may be posted. Any content that does not strictly conform to the guidelines should be approved by a supervisor prior to posting.

Requests to post information over department social media by members who are not authorized to post should be made through the member's chain of command.

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342.5 AUTHORIZED CONTENT

The potential uses of social media are limitless. However, only content that is appropriate for public release, that supports the department mission and conforms to all department policies regarding the release of information may be posted. Department members with ideas for potential uses of social media should submit their ideas through their chain of command for approval by the Chief of Police.

Examples of appropriate content include:

- (a) Announcements.
- (b) Tips and information related to crime prevention.
- (c) Investigative requests for information.
- (d) Requests that ask the community to engage in projects that are relevant to the department mission.
- (e) Real-time safety information that is related to in-progress crimes, geographical warnings or disaster information.
- (f) Traffic information.
- (g) Press releases.
- (h) Recruitment of personnel.

Personnel representing the department on social media sites shall conduct themselves at all times as a representative of the department. All department standards of conduct apply to these sites, and personnel shall observe accepted protocols and proper decorum in their activities on these sites. All postings will be factual, accurate, complete, and within their area of expertise.

Personnel representing the department shall not make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments concerning pending prosecution, not post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information. Employees shall not conduct political activities or private business on department sites or pages.

Employees will not share personal information about themselves, or any other FPD employee, or City of Fargo employee on any FPD approved social media web site.

Employees shall observe and abide by all copyright, trademark, and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.

342.5.1 INCIDENT-SPECIFIC USE

In instances of active incidents where speed, accuracy and frequent updates are paramount (e.g., crime alerts, public safety information, traffic issues), the Public Information Officer or the authorized designee will be responsible for the compilation of information to be released, subject to the approval of the Incident Commander.

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342.6 MODERATION OF THIRD PARTY CONTENT

As a public entity, the Fargo Police Department must abide by certain standards to serve all its constituents in a civil and unbiased manner. Posts or comments on a department sanctioned social media site containing any of the following inappropriate forms of content shall not be permitted and are subject to removal by the department PIO or his/her designee:

- (a) Content that is abusive, discriminatory, inflammatory or sexually explicit.
- (b) Any information that violates individual rights, including confidentiality and/or privacy rights and those provided under state, federal or local laws.
- (c) Any information that could compromise an ongoing investigation.
- (d) Any information that could compromise or damage the mission, function, reputation or professionalism of the Fargo Police Department or its members.
- (e) Any information that could compromise the safety and security of department operations, members of the Department, victims, suspects or the public.
- (f) Any content posted for personal use.
- (g) Any content that has not been properly authorized by this policy or a supervisor.

Any member who becomes aware of content on this department's social media site that he/she believes is unauthorized or inappropriate should promptly report such content to a supervisor or to the department's social media coordinator. The supervisor or social media coordinator will ensure its removal from public view and investigate the cause of the entry.

A comment posted by a member of the public on any FPD social media web page site is the opinion of the commentator or poster only, and publication of a comment does not imply endorsement, or agreement by the FPD, nor do such comments necessarily reflect the opinions of policies of the FPD.

Complaints against employees should not be reported on FPD social media sites. If a complaint is received via social media, the complaint will be handled according to existing FPD complaint procedures.

342.6.1 PUBLIC POSTING

Department social media sites shall be designed and maintained in order to provide posting of content by the public. The City of Fargo and the Fargo Police Department reserves the right to restrict or remove any content, which is deemed in violation of this policy, and the City of Fargo social media policy, or any applicable law.

342.7 MONITORING CONTENT

The Administrative Services Commander will appoint a supervisor to review, at least annually, the use of department social media and report back on, at a minimum, the resources being used, the effectiveness of the content, any unauthorized or inappropriate content and the resolution of any issues.

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342.8 RETENTION OF RECORDS

The Administration Division Commander should work with the Custodian of Records to establish a method of ensuring that public records generated in the process of social media use are retained in accordance with established records retention schedules.

342.9 TRAINING

Authorized members should receive training that, at a minimum, addresses legal issues concerning the appropriate use of social media sites, as well as privacy, civil rights, dissemination and retention of information posted on department sites.